

Fisheries Service Weekly Report
August 23, 2012

Commercial Striped Bass Tag Reduction / Alternative Management Update - As a result of the passing of Addendum III to Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Council's Atlantic Striped Bass Fisheries Management Plan, staff has been developing a program to further reduce the number of tags distributed to commercial striped bass permit holders in 2013. One component of this plan includes limitations on the number of tags that a waterman can request at any one time based on previous harvest behavior. This is something that is already built in to our current system; however, we intend to elevate the criteria for fishermen to be awarded more than 500 tags at any given time. Another component of this plan involves charging watermen for the tags that they are ordering. This may deter watermen who are unsure about whether or not they will be fishing in 2013. However, we expect the reduction based on this action to be relatively low. Our plan is to have a fully implemented tag reduction program compliant with Addendum III for the 2014 fishing season (1/1/14). Full compliance is only possible with significant alterations to the management system for this fishery. Work is already underway to make these changes and our first round of open houses to gather stakeholder comments on possible options have been scheduled. The dates, locations, and times of the open houses will be as follows:

September 18th, 2012	September 20th, 2012	September 25th, 2012	September 27th, 2012
Solomons Volunteer Fire Department 13150 HG Trueman Rd. Solomons, MD 20688 Time: Anytime from 2 pm to 8 pm	BG Louis G. Smith Armory 7111 Ocean Gateway Easton, MD 21601 Time: Anytime from 2 pm to 8 pm	Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay 100 Heron Blvd Cambridge, MD 21613 Clipper Meeting Room Time: Anytime from 2 pm to 8 pm	Earleigh Heights Fire Department 161 Ritchie Highway Severna Park, MD 21146 Time: Anytime from 2 pm to 8 pm

Environmental Review – Attended a webinar concerning flow modeling results at Conowingo Dam which included participants from NGOs, PA DEP, and USFWS. The modeling was done as a result of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing process. The OASIS model was used for this analysis and it was overlaid with habitat suitability curves for American shad, river herring, sturgeon and smallmouth bass. Results indicate that:

- If Conowingo Dam operated at run-of-river (in-flow equaled out-flow) then suitable habitat below the dam would increase by 37%.
- Spawning habitat below Conowingo Dam for smallmouth bass, sunfish and rock bass are permanently impacted by operations because of the daily peaking flows.
- Previous minimum flow requirements drive the peaking events at Conowingo Dam because of the limited amount of storage in the pool.
- Muddy Run located in the pool above Conowingo Dam is operated only during maximum profit (daytime).
- Next steps include incorporating various operating scenarios into the flow calculation to determine if there is a convergence of power generation and fish habitat; results of this analysis will be complete by October 2012.

Re-worked the American shad model for Conowingo Dam. It demonstrated that the goal of 2 million above York Haven Dam can be reached with successful young-of-the-year and adult downstream passage. This will include reinitiating upstream truck and transport.

Coordinating review of two significant projects: the first is a large commercial development near Piney Bog (Charles County). This project was extensively surveyed in a Power Plant Research Program report produced in 2009 that stressed the importance of buffer areas and maintaining the existing hydrology. The second project is a proposed invasive species plan for Blossom Point (Charles County). It includes writing an environmental assessment of the area to determine areas in need of invasive species control.

Completed reviews of eight projects including a directional drilling project under Spa Creek in Annapolis. Comments for these projects included in-stream time-of-year restrictions for rare, threatened or endangered species and maintaining hydrological conditions for several housing projects.

Coastal Fisheries Program – A Spiny Dogfish Industry meeting was held on Wednesday, August 22. Staff presented background information and distributed workgroup nomination forms. Nominations are due back September 5. The first workgroup meeting is expected to be late September or early October.

Aquaculture Division

Leasing/Permitting - Leasing totals through 8/22/12:

Lease Site Totals		Acreage Totals
141	Submitted since 9/7/10 (SLL+WC)	3215.344
32	Executed since 9/7/10 (SLL only)	1181.75
15	Executed since 9/7/10 (WC only)	67.76
47	All executed since 9/7/10	1249.51
2	Pending Execution (SLL+WC)	133.9
33	Terminated/Withdrawn	1268
65	Still in process since 9/7/10 (SLL+WC)	748
7	Incomplete	69.3
79	All applications submitted since 8/1/11	665.0623
46	Water Column submitted since 8/1/11	305.7458
9	Water Column executed since 8/1/11	29.78
8	In-water nursery (upweller) apps since 8/1/11 Subset of WC	0.5395
24	Sanctuary submitted since 8/1/11	158.0037
2	Sanctuary executed since 8/1/11	30.7
34	Permitted by ACOE since 9/7/11	846.33

Highlights:

- No new lease applications have been received since the 8/8/12 report.
- Lease agreements for three new leases were mailed this week. A fourth new agreement is still in preparation, pending resolution with the Corps over their resistance to permitting the same area that the State has approved for issuance.
- Four public notice comment periods for six proposed aquaculture lease sites are currently active and have received no responses to date. Several others are in preparation to initiate in the coming weeks.
- Approximately 19 new applications are in preparation for submission to the Army Corps of Engineers. Staff provided reformatted plans to the Corps this week for three projects previously submitted on 6/01/12, but which were rejected as “incomplete” because measurements were provided in meters rather than feet.
- Five lease renewal documents are being finalized to mail out to the leaseholders for signature(s). Two of the five require the leases to be resurveyed by Hydrographic Operations prior to the issuance of the renewal due to significant changes in the adjacent shoreline(s) during the previous 20-year term of each lease.
- Transfer applications for 12 leases have been received so far this month and have been forwarded to the Office of the Attorney General for execution. Two other transfer applications are incomplete and will be moved forward pending receipt of the remaining required elements from each transferee.
- Prepared summary documents for and coordinated the Aquaculture Review Board meeting held 8/14/12.

Shellfish Aquaculture Harvester Permit and Registration Card Issuance - Processed and issued an additional 25 permit and registration card packages. We have now issued permit packages to a total of 260 of 361 active leases to date. The leases that are remaining have not been issued permits because they: have failed to submit necessary documentation to be permitted; are restoration leases awaiting conversion to a demonstration lease and are awaiting the next permit batch process; are new leases and have not been sent SAHP applications; or are in the process of a transfer.

Terminations – Failure to submit required forms - Aquaculture laws and regulations require that a leaseholder submit an annual report documenting the use of the lease during the prior year and submit an application for Shellfish Aquaculture Harvester Permits and Registration Cards. The Department mailed blank copies of the required forms along with a rent invoice for each of these leases on February 1, 2012. The completed forms were due to the Department on March 15, 2012. The Department mailed a delinquency notice and duplicate forms on July 20, 2012 requesting that they be completed and returned by August 3, 2012. On August 22, 18 leases were terminated for failure to respond to the delinquency notice and submit these necessary forms.

Leases Ended for Failure to Renew - Leases that were due to be renewed, or had passed their renewal date in 2012, were mailed a courtesy letter and renewal application on May 9, 2012. The letter stated that the application for renewal must be returned within 30 days or the lease would be considered expired and revert back to the State. The Department did not receive a response to this letter from 2 leaseholders and consequently the leases have reverted back to the

State. Both of these leaseholders were sent letters via certified mail on August 22, 2012 to inform them of the expired status of their lease.

Field Operations/Marylanders Grow Oysters (MGO) - Working with Chesapeake BaySavers, Arlington Echo, and the Annapolis Harbormaster on a project that allows students to care for and monitor MGO oysters attached to the finger piers at City Dock. This week staff transported spat on shell from the DNR Piney Point hatchery to City Dock in Annapolis to start the educational project. The Severn River is already an MGO tributary so this City Dock project is an extension of ongoing MGO efforts in the Severn.

Met with Crisfield leaseholder John Tull to deliver 100 'farm-raised shellfish' tags, and accompany him on a site visit to his water column lease. Mr. Tull is raising oysters in double stack bottom cages. He sold his first market oyster in June and anticipates harvesting and selling more product beginning in September. Approximately 75-90% of the oysters in the cages appeared to be 3 inches or greater. The oyster lease was well marked with the required buoys. Mr. Tull indicated that he is interested in being notified if the State reduces the minimum harvest size for farm raised oysters.

Inland Fisheries Division

Trout surveys- Documented wild brook trout in an unnamed tributary to Little Gunpowder Falls (Harford County). Seven healthy adult brook trout were captured in 200 meters of stream. This stream was last electrofished in 2003 and no brook trout were found in the same segment. The first and last documented occurrence of brook trout in this stream was in 1986.

Conducted three depressing electrofishing surveys in three former trout streams. The headwaters of Cattail Creek (Howard County) which formerly had a brook trout population; Wildcat Branch (Montgomery County) which formerly had a wild brown trout population; and Laurel Brook Run (Harford County) which formerly had a wild brook trout population. All three watersheds have experienced some relatively minor changes in land use, drought conditions, and riparian buffer issues since trout were last documented in each stream.

Smallmouth bass - Seine hauls were conducted at eight sites on the Monocacy River to assess the natural reproduction of smallmouth bass and nongame fish species. Results showed a geometric mean of 3.0 young smallmouth per haul; higher than the long-term mean of 2.4 bass per haul and the third highest recorded since 1997. Above average hatches recorded in 2011 and 2012 are expected to provide very good fishing in the coming years.

Staff and Jim Cummins (Resource Director at Interstate Commission on Potomac River Basin) floated a section of the lower nontidal Potomac River from just below Great Falls downstream to Lock 6. Due to limited access and potentially dangerous conditions, little sampling has been conducted in this stretch of the Potomac. The purpose of the trip was to identify and record coordinates for potential seining locations to assess reproduction of fish species, primarily smallmouth bass, which would compliment existing data from more accessible upstream stretches. A total of nine hauls were completed and no young smallmouth bass were captured; however, several were observed. The unique geology of the Potomac below the Fall Line results in impressive rock formations and rapids. However the extensive ledge rock does not provide productive habitat for macroinvertebrates or an abundance of spawning substrate for fish.

Tidal Bass - Eleven volunteers from the Maryland Bass Federation Nation Youth Chapter and Shepherd University assisted staff in building habitat structures aimed at improving reproductive habitat for largemouth bass in established sanctuaries of Potomac River. For the past 3 years, it has been determined that the sanctuaries should be improved in their performance for largemouth bass reproduction. While the structure design is currently under review by MDE, it is expected that these structures will be deployed in March 2013.



Outreach - An electrofishing boat used for fish surveys and informational posters highlighting area fishery resources and fishing opportunities were displayed at the Buck Wild Outdoor Expo. Staff manned the event and answered questions from the general public during the three day show.

Trout stocking – Stocked 20,000 fingerling (160/lb) rainbow trout into Antietam Creek to maintain the put-and-grow fishery. The

fingerlings were lake-strain rainbows (from the Egan Hatchery in Utah) reared by Albert Powell Hatchery staff at the Cushwa satellite facility. Future electrofishing surveys will evaluate the success of this introduction.

Hatcheries Division

Warm water hatcheries - Nearly 1,000 hybrid sunfish were harvested from ponds at Manning Hatchery and transported to ponds at Lewistown Work Center. These fish were held in high density culture conditions in Manning ponds, so transfer to Lewistown should improve growth and fish condition. The hybrid sunfish will be used in children's fishing rodeos during the 2013 season.

Staff provided technical advice to private pond owners on aeration and liming issues.

A road and culvert that were washed out at Manning Hatchery during the hurricane and tropical storm of 2011 were finally repaired this week.

Shad restoration – Staff began the annual juvenile shad survey on the Patuxent River. The survey assesses American shad and hickory shad stocking efficacy, and serves to estimate wild origin juvenile shad abundance in the target tributaries. Staff observed no juvenile shad or herring species in the Patuxent River during the first round of sampling. This unfortunately mirrors the observations indicated by other ongoing juvenile surveys that indicate poor shad and herring recruitment in many Chesapeake Bay tributaries this year. During spring 2012, a record number (608) of adult American shad were observed on the Patuxent River spawning grounds and staff were hopeful that subsequent recruitment success would occur. Capture of shad juveniles can be erratic due to their patchy distribution in large, tidal tributaries, so future sampling rounds will be needed to confirm this initial observation.

Fisheries Marketing Division

Chef Education Trips – Directed two chef education trips totaling over 40 foodservice professionals to JM Clayton and Marinetics. These chefs learned about our local products and the gear used to harvest them.

Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission meeting – Commission members voted on our new Maryland Seafood Program logo, a potential partnership with Virginia in the True Blue Program, and some print media advertising. The commissioners believe that if we are to continue attending the International Boston Seafood Show that we should invest in a new booth to help update our appearance.

Maryland Seafood Festival Planning – The Maryland Seafood Festival is right around the corner. We are busy lining up chefs for the demos as well as finalizing the supplies that will be available for the chefs, staff for the tent, recipes, advertising, giveaways, and other logistics.

Mermaid's Kiss Event – The Mermaid's Kiss Event is coming together. If you are interested in buying tickets please go to the following link:

<http://events.constantcontact.com/register/event?llr=zzkaxecab&oeidk=a07e63ekcmq8d687f90>.

Communications and Outreach Division

News - Brownsville Pond Drained For Public Safety

http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/news/story.asp?story_id=262

Young Angler Lands Maryland Record Grouper

http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/news/story.asp?story_id=265

DNR Announces Seafood Marketing Logo Contest Winner

http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/news/story.asp?story_id=263

Marylanders Grow Oysters Program Continues to Expand in 2012

http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/news/story.asp?story_id=264

Angler's Log - 27 Angler's Log Submissions reviewed and posted (22 previous report).

Public Notices - Application for Shellfish Aquaculture Leases - Gabeler

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/notices/notices.asp>

New content/Design –

SAFIS FAQ video embedded to tutorial page

Article on Effects of Plastic Lures posted to Black Bass web site

Updates –

Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission (SFAC)

Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission (TFAC)

Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission (SMAC)

Oyster Advisory Commission (OAC)

Commercial late and violations Reports
Striped bass harvest charts
True Blue promotion web site
Coastal Program page update
Freshwater Fishing Hotspots pages
Oyster and Clam Harvest Forms for 2012/2013
Proposed Regulations (4 additions)
Draft Regulations (2 additions)

Fishing Report - The fishing report covered the striped bass fishing in the middle and upper bay areas and changes in striped bass fishing in the lower bay region. Spanish mackerel are being caught in the middle and lower regions of the bay and bluefish can be found in all three regions. Flounder fishing in the Tangier Sound area is good. Freshwater fishing topics covered included largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, trout and channel catfish. Coastal fishermen are catching and releasing white marlin, catches of yellowfin tuna dropped off last week and flounder fishing remains good.

Social Media –

Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/MDDNRFisheriesService> -

Fan base totaled 465 representing a potential reach of about 137,000 people. Recent posts include: notice of the draining of Brownsville Pond due to a imminent failure of the earthen dam; announcement of a cooperative blue catfish tagging program by VIMS and MD-DNR; announcement of two successive snowy grouper state records in an eight-day span; a link to the Natural Resource Magazine article regarding the need to recycle soft plastic baits instead of throwing them in the water; and announcement of the Mermaid's Kiss local seafood event at the National Aquarium.

Twitter - 1328 Followers (1310 previous report). Posted 2 Tweets relating to Fisheries items.

Constant Contact - 365 total subscribers. On 8/08, sent email "Mid-Atlantic Council to Host Two-Part Public Listening Session on August 14" to 351 subscribers on the Commercial Fisheries and Tidal Recreational Fisheries subscriber lists. To date 38% of subscribers have opened the email, 10 bounced back.

Customer Service - Most customer service requests were recreational in nature and covered a wide variety of topics. Several requests involved out of state vacationers asking for clarity on licensing for fishing and crabbing and others were general questions about gear types, times, places to crab and licensing for recreational crabbing. Other topics were fish identification, snakehead spawning and distribution, bow fishing records for snakeheads and places to find snakeheads. In addition, topics covered the legal use of cast nets for collecting bait in the Chesapeake Bay, location of boat ramps, a report of a sick fish in the Patapsco River and endocrine disrupter possibilities in white perch. Crabbing questions covered places to go crabbing, regulations and crab habits during drought conditions. Trout fishing questions are beginning to occur related to the fall trout stocking dates, and trout survival in the Gunpowder during the summer months. A total of five fish identification questions were received with

photos attached; they included a lizard fish, rock bass, striped blenny, hogchoker and a small red drum caught near Salisbury on the Wicomico River.

Two organizations requested license exemptions for taking a group of mentally challenged or disabled individuals fishing without 2012 fishing licenses. The requests were approved.

Fishing Challenge - 46 award certificates were mailed to entrants in the Maryland Fishing Challenge. Two individuals were entered into the contest. Total submissions for awards of individual fish caught since Sep 9, 2011 is 957 (923 in the previous week).

Seven Diamond Jim tagged striped bass had been reported. Five have been certified and are eligible for prizes. Two are pending certification.

Fishing Challenge supporting organizations convened a final conference call to discuss their wishes and needs for participation in this year's Finale event. The plan is for the organizations to exhibit in a Fishing in Maryland Promenade along the path next to the stage seating area for the morning of the event. The organizations will host activities such as casting demos, kids casting challenges, fly-tying, and staff table displays to explain what they do and sign up new members. The Promenade will be active from 7:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. on Saturday September 8.

Maryland Youth Fishing Club - Thirteen new entries were made to the Maryland Youth Fishing Club and welcome packets were mailed for a total of 793 entrants to date.

Graphics - Designed poster and sign-up card for State Fair for Constant Contact Email List. Designed and printed "Do Not Enter" posters for Brownsville Pond.

Web Analytics -

Top 25 Fisheries Pages for week:

Page Title	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page
Maryland Angler's Log - Share Your Catch!	17,053	13,804	0:01:51
Maryland Weekly Fishing Report Overview	15,378	12,815	0:02:38
Maryland Tide Finder	10,161	8,730	0:02:50
Fisheries Service	10,034	7,739	0:01:02
Maryland Fishing Regulations	7,524	5,874	0:02:00
Keep Fishing	1,412	963	0:01:37
Recreational Fishing Information	1,412	1,167	0:01:04
Maryland Trout Fishing Information	1,114	897	0:01:46
Maryland Fisheries Map Index	1,019	514	0:01:26
Hot Spot Map	999	795	0:01:58
The Maryland Fishing Challenge Featuring Diamond Jim	946	714	0:01:57
Commercial Fishing Information	912	641	0:01:58
(not set)	826	711	0:01:55
Fisheries Calendar	761	631	0:00:36
Maryland Fishing State Records	562	460	0:02:21

Maryland Angler's Log - Profile	551	444	0:01:59
Event Information	354	318	0:06:00
Shellfish Program	349	265	0:01:26
Public Notices	276	147	0:00:35
Current Entrants - Maryland Fishing Challenge Featuring Diamond Jim	267	213	0:00:53
True Blue	261	229	0:03:32
Maryland Artificial Reef Initiative	210	122	0:01:49
Young Angler Lands Maryland Record Grouper	190	171	0:02:40
Fisheries Management in Maryland	174	127	0:00:59
Maryland striped bass harvest monitoring	169	147	0:01:44
	77,138	61,960	0:01:53

Day	Pageviews
8/13/2012	11,380
8/14/2012	10,844
8/15/2012	11,983
8/16/2012	12,032
8/17/2012	11,733
8/18/2012	10,104
8/19/2012	9,062
	77,138

Artificial Reef Updates –

Update on St. Mary's Reef Ball Project - (St. Mary's College and St. Mary's Watershed Association) the St. Mary's Watershed Association has purchased at least one and possibly two small reef ball molds. They are up and running on the St. Mary's River project (site off the College shoreline) with permits in hand and are ready to place material in October.

Hail Cove reef project (Eastern Neck, lower Chester River) - Start date for Hail Cove reef project (along Eastern Neck in the lower Chester River), in partnership with USFWS, is going to be pushed back to late fall or spring. DNR Construction Unit would prefer April/May for start date. We have been dealing with an expired MDE License and Water Quality Certification (WQC) letter that needs to be renewed or extended.

Policy Letter on "Burial Reefs" - Policy letter (signed by Director of Fisheries Service) was sent out. It prohibits individuals and companies from deploying reef structures with encased cremated human remains as part of a burial at sea ceremony. This letter applies to all Maryland Chesapeake Bay waters, and ocean state waters out to 3 miles offshore. Staff received comments, questions, and complaints regarding the policy.

General interest in reef ball projects at two fishing piers (permitted sites) - There is general interest to deploy reef balls at the permitted reef sites at the Choptank River Fishing Pier and the Point Lookout State Park Fishing Pier. The interest in the Choptank River Site is coming from the Dorchester County Chapter of the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishing Association. In the past,

the Dorchester Chapter has built reef balls for the Cooks Pt. project, and they may be able to build additional reef balls for the pier site. The interest in the Point Lookout site is coming from the Park Manager at Point Lookout State Park Complex.

“Coral Castle” Reef deployments off Ocean City: Capt. Monty Hawkins, president of Ocean City Reef Foundation (OCRF) continues to deploy “coral castle” concrete blocks at permitted reef sites off the coast of Ocean City. The permits are held by the Town of Ocean City, Engineer’s Office. To date, the Castles have been funded by a \$500 donation from the MARI 501-C-3 fund and significant private donations from the OCRF 501-C-3 fund. Staff will investigate grant funding for this type of project (most of the remaining MARI funds are restricted to Bay reef work).

Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (MAFMC) Agenda Item - Delaware’s Request for Special Management Zones (SMZ) at 5 Artificial Reef sites in Federal Waters -

On Tuesday, 8/14, the Mid-Atlantic Council met to consider Delaware’s request for SMZ status on five artificial reef sites in Federal waters off DE (in the EEZ). The regulations in these zones could be used to restrict some types of commercial fishing gear (mainly sea bass pots). Commercial and recreational hook-and-line fishing would be allowed. The main task was to review the report of the SMZ Monitoring Team, and start the process of developing recommendations. The Council referred the matter to the Demersal and Coastal Migratory Committee (Black sea bass, scup, summer flounder, and bluefish). The Demersal Committee will develop some options at the October Council meeting, then hold public hearings in November, and take final Council action in December. Links with MAFMC agenda and Artificial Reef SMZ meeting materials:

http://mafmc.org/press/2012/pr12_15_August_Council_Agenda.pdf

http://www.mafmc.org/meeting_materials/2012/August%202012/Tab%2004_Special_Management_Zone_Consideration.pdf

Shellfish Division

Shellfish Population Monitoring- Staff completed the 2011 Fall Oyster Survey report. Will be posted on the Internet on August 21. The majority of newsworthy items presented in this report were already part of the press release in February

<http://dnr.maryland.gov/dnrnews/pressrelease2012/021312d.asp>

Shellfish Monitoring - The 4-yr field component of a UMd-led *Vibrio* study is about to conclude. MDNR Shellfish Division provided vessel time and staff in support of this project. Staff attended a conference at UMd-College Park which provided an overview of the project and some preliminary results. In addition to Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay, this study is being conducted in Washington and the Gulf Coast to elucidate environmental factors that affect presence and abundance of three waterborne *Vibrio* species which can be pathogenic to humans (*V. cholerae*, *V. parahaemolyticus*, *V. vulnificus*). The ultimate goal is to develop a model based on environmental parameters to predict when *Vibrio* spp. levels will be high. This is especially important to the growing aquaculture industry in Maryland since these pathogens can be harbored in oysters. Although all three *Vibrio* species occur in Maryland, no toxic strains of *V. cholerae* were detected and only very low levels of pathogenic *V. parahaemolyticus* were found.

The *V. vulnificus* strains have not yet been evaluated - the laboratory aspect of this study is still ongoing.

Oyster Shell Recovery- Three buy boats continue to dredge and place shell for the industry and aquaculture, and a fourth buy boat has recently been purchased to add capacity. To date roughly 358,100 bushels of shell have been delivered for industry use and 72,100 bushels to 9 leaseholders. Fisheries staff are making day-to-day placement decisions to equitably distribute shell, and shell deliveries to leaseholders and sanctuaries will be taking precedent over deliveries to the industry for the remainder of 2012. We continue to work with Maryland Historical Trust to find new sources of shallow shells for recovery.

Legislation, Regulation, FMP, Fish Passage and Habitat Protection

FMP/FP

FMP staff completed the striped bass, yellow perch, white perch and blue crab FMP updates for the 2011 Legislative Report.

FMP staff began an on-line training course for programming Python code, the scripting language used for ArcGIS software.

FMP staff processed supplemental MD Property View data that details property improvements (pool, deck, garage, etc.) from the years 1997 – 2010. These data will be used to further refine the land development models used by the Fisheries Habitat and Ecosystem Program

FMP staff revised the figures for the ACFHP fish-habitat matrix manuscript.

FP staff reviewed the various criteria and modeling scenarios from the draft Chesapeake Bay Fish Passage Prioritization (CBFPP) tool. Also, tested the various weightings of each parameter in the matrix. FP Partners participated on a conference call to discuss the CBFFP results to date and are hoping to have final comments/suggestions in by the end of August. The goal is to have the tool sent out to a broader group of interested parties for review in October.

FP staff met with ACOE staff about modifying the Masonville Mitigation Project 6 – American Eel Passage. The original proposal was to install eel ladders on the mainstem Patapsco dams. Since the proposal was submitted (in 2007), two of the dams have been removed and the third dam is under consideration for removal. Staff will be modifying the proposal to obtain funds for continued biological monitoring.

FHEP

FHEP staff are beginning the process of analyzing the stomach contents of striped bass. Striped bass stomachs were collected by the Fish Health Program at Oxford Lab as an addition to their standard monitoring.

FHEP staff are presenting two presentations for the land use and fisheries symposium on August 22nd at the American Fisheries Society's annual meeting in Minnesota.

FHEP staff are entering Scientific Collection Permit Data (SCP) data on a spreadsheet for the year 2009 off of the hard copy returns. This information is being coordinated with MBSS for a possible future map plotting. Data is being entered in a 2012 to 2003 sequence.

FHEP staff are entering 2012 spring and summer data.

FHEP staff were accepted to give a forum at the upcoming 2012 Chesapeake Watershed Forum, sponsored by the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay (September 28-30). The presentation is titled Conserving Key Fish Habitat in Maryland and will include an overview of fish habitat impacts from development, lessons learned from Mattawoman Creek and a summary of planning recommendations compiled from the Mattawoman Ecosystem document. The goal is to provide the citizens with the science supporting the impacts of development and equip them with sound planning recommendations, so they can address habitat protection at the local level.

FHEP staff are continuing their summer sampling of the estuarine fish community in Wicomico River (Potomac), Gunpowder River, Middle River, Tred Avon River, Mattawoman Creek, Piscataway Creek, Harris Creek, and Broad Creek (Eastern Shore). Staff are evaluating nursery and adult habitat of recreationally important finfish in sub estuaries of the Chesapeake Bay located on both the Eastern and western shores to see how development, indicated by the density of structures (houses, businesses, etc.) impact the habitat of finfish. Summer sampling will be completed at the end of September.

Regulations

The following regulation packages will be circulated for approval in the next week:

Nontidal (yearly updates), Lobster (ASMFC requirements)

The following regulation packages are under preparation:

Penalties (annual adjustments), Restitution (system for egregious fishing violations), Blue Crabbing Charters/Education Permits (consolidate into one regulation), Billfish (add roundscale sailfish)

The following regulation packages became effective this week:

- Free Fishing Areas — Coast — Proposed — 08.02.01.07
Effective 8/20/12 — Add Northside Park and the Chicago Avenue bulkhead as free fishing areas.
- Seafood Marketing — True Blue Program — Proposed — 08.02.24.01
Effective 8/20/12 — Allow restaurants serving Department-verified Maryland blue crab product to use a special logo in marketing or advertising the product.

The following public notices were issued this week:

View notices at <http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/notices/notices.asp>

- Shellfish Aquaculture Leases — William Gabeler in Grey's Creek off Assawoman Bay, Worcester County, Maryland. The adjoining sites are located on the south side of the creek. First area is for a submerged land lease, second area is for a water column lease. Published in the Worcester County TimesThursdays, August 23 and August 30, 2012.

The following regulation packages have been proposed and are following the APA process:

View proposals in Maryland Register at

<http://www.dsd.state.md.us/MDRegister/mdregister.aspx>

- Blue Crab Fishery Management Plan Amendment — Proposed — 08.02.01.01
Maryland Register 6/29/12, Comment Period Ends 7/30/12, Scheduled Effective 9/3/12
Amendment #2 to the 1997 Chesapeake Blue Crab FMP provides the mechanism for formally adopting the new biological reference points and control rule.
- Tautog — Proposed — 08.02.05.20
Maryland Register 6/29/12, Comment Period Ends 7/30/12, Scheduled Effective 9/3/12
Error found in the Tautog stock assessment: season ends November 26 instead of November 15.
- Horseshoe Crabs — Proposed — 08.02.10.01
Maryland Register 7/27/12, Comment Period Ends 8/27/12, Scheduled Effective 10/1/12
Recreational and Commercial fishery changes.
- Oysters — Power Dredge Permit and Lines; Hand Tong Lines — Proposed — 08.02.04.09.12
Maryland Register 7/27/12, Comment Period Ends 8/27/12, Scheduled Effective 10/1/12
Remove permit requirement; fix lines.
- Oysters — PSFA — Proposed — 08.02.04.17
Maryland Register 7/27/12, Comment Period Ends 8/27/12, Scheduled Effective 10/1/12
Fix lines.
- Summer Flounder — Proposed — 08.02.05.12
Maryland Register 8/10/12, Comment Period Ends 9/10/12, Scheduled Effective 10/15/12
Standardize the declaration period, standardize ownership of a federally permitted vessel, clarify the limit of 2 quotas fished from the same vessel, clarify how overages will be deducted, clarify why public notices are issued, cap the permits at 7 (current number) and allow for transfer of 100% of individual's quota, but with cap on amount of quota any one individual may acquire.
- Black Bass Tournament Permit — Proposed — 08.02.01.11
Maryland Register 8/24/12, Comment Period Ends 9/24/12, Scheduled Effective 10/29/12
Require largemouth and smallmouth bass tournament directors to obtain a free permit before conducting bass tournaments in Maryland.
- Black Sea Bass — Proposed — 08.02.05.21
Maryland Register 9/7/12, Comment Period Ends 10/9/12, Scheduled Effective 11/12/12
Standardize the declaration period, standardize text regarding ownership of a federally permitted vessel, clarify the limit of 2 quotas fished from the same vessel, clarify how overages will be deducted, clarify why public notices are issued, cap the permits at 14

(current number) and allow for transfer of 100% of individual's quota, but with cap on amount of quota any one individual may acquire.

- Aquaculture — Emergency — 08.02.23.02-.04
Pending AELR Approval
Smaller size limit for aquaculture during closed wild fishery, fees and rent for water column leases; seed oyster size.

The following are current emergency actions in effect:

- Fishing in Nontidal Waters — Emergency — 08.02.11.01
Effective June 26 through December 20, 2012
Remove Lion's Park Pond in Allegany County and Avalon Pond (Lost Lake) in Baltimore County from the list of areas limited to individuals under 16 years of age, 65 years of age and older, and Blind Persons. Both areas will be placed on the Put-and-Take Trout Fishing Areas.